

PRE-FIRE MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

BATTALION 1 – Battalion Chief Mike Santuccio

And the Upper Ridge Preservation Alliance – Coordinator Don Steele

Purpose Statement

Battalion 1 of the CDF Butte Unit is located in the northeastern corner of Butte County. Almost all of the area's population lies on the Paradise Ridge. This main ridge includes the incorporated Town of Paradise, and the unincorporated areas of Paradise Pines/Magalia, DeSabra, and Stirling City. These areas represent a significant "urban interface" wildland fire protection problem where relatively high density housing abruptly joins wildland areas. The remainder of Battalion 1 is comprised of scattered homes of low density comprising an "urban intermix" fire protection problem. Most of the battalion is predominantly heavy mature brush (fuel model #6) below the main ridge, and commercial timber (fuel model #9) to the north and east of the populated areas.

Historically, most of the large damaging fires within Battalion 1 have occurred in the drainages that boarder the populated Paradise/Paradise Pines ridge. Although in some cases, these fires mostly driven by upslope or up canyon winds have posed a serious threat to portions of Paradise and Paradise Pines, to date the fires have been contained prior to reaching these communities. The greatest risk to the ridge communities is from an East Wind driven fire that originates above the communities and blows downhill through developed areas. This is the same type of fire that impacted the Oakland Berkeley Hills during the October 20, 1991 firestorm.

Fire cause statistics for Battalion 1 during the year 2003 are very similar to those from previous years. The leading causes of preventable vegetation fires were equipment use, debris burning, and arson respectively. Equipment use cause fires are relatively common and can be the result of failure to comply with laws governing equipment use, such as spark arrestors. The debris fires generally are not of the nature that result in an escape fire, rather they are the result of citizens burning debris piles out of hours or during periods where burning has been suspended. The arson problem is largely teenagers or children "playing with fire." Generally, the reduction of unwanted fires comes through fire prevention efforts, such as code enforcement and public education.